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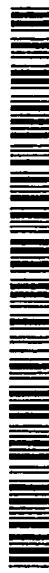
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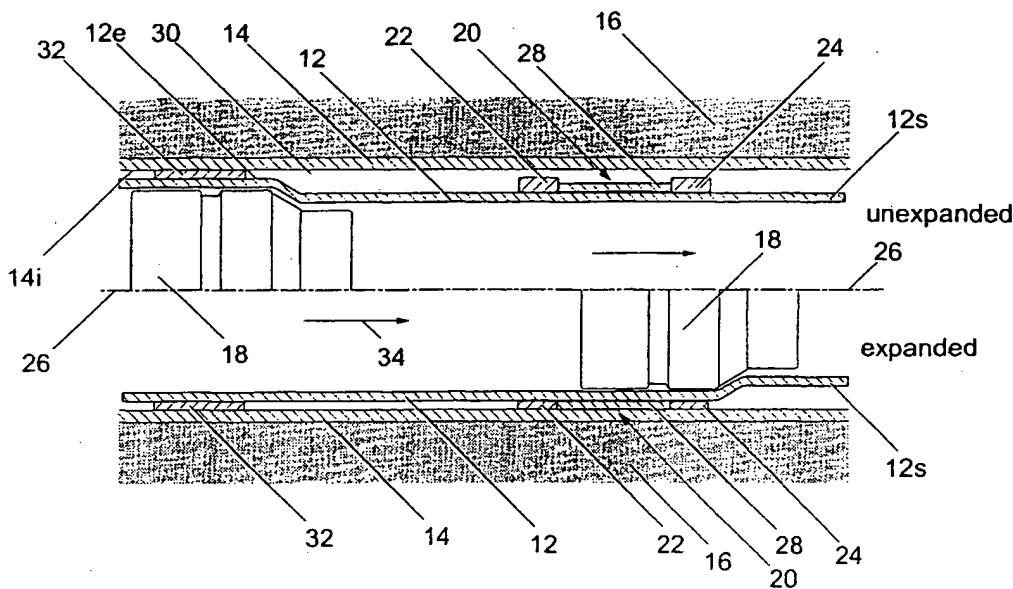
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(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR AND A METHOD OF ANCHORING AN EXPANDABLE CONDUIT



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(57) Abstract: The present invention provides apparatus and a method of anchoring an expandable conduit. A formation is provided on an outer surface of the conduit, the formation comprising a number of bands of a friction and/or sealing material. When the expandable conduit is radially expanded, the friction and/or sealing material engages a second conduit in which the expandable conduit is located. The engagement of the friction and/or sealing material provides an anchor for the expandable conduit.

1 casing contacts the formation around the borehole. The
2 pliable casing undergoes plastic deformation when
3 expanded, typically by passing an expander device, such
4 as a ceramic or steel cone or the like, through the
5 casing. The expander device is propelled along the
6 casing in a similar manner to a pipeline pig and may be
7 pushed (using fluid pressure for example) or pulled
8 (using drill pipe, rods, coiled tubing, a wireline or
9 the like).

10

11 Lengths of expandable casing are coupled together
12 (typically by threaded couplings) to produce a casing
13 string. The casing string is inserted into the
14 borehole in an unexpanded state and is subsequently
15 expanded using the expander device. However, the
16 unexpanded casing string requires to be anchored either
17 at an upper end or a lower end thereof before and/or
18 during the expansion process.

19

20 According to a first aspect of the present invention,
21 there is provided apparatus for anchoring an expandable
22 conduit, the apparatus comprising at least one
23 formation provided on an outer surface of the
24 expandable conduit, the formation being capable of
25 engaging a second conduit in which the expandable
26 conduit is located, the formation providing an anchor
27 and/or seal for the expandable conduit when the
28 expandable conduit is at least partially expanded.

29

30 According to a second aspect of the present invention,
31 there is provided a method of anchoring an expandable
32 conduit, the method comprising the steps of providing

1 a 40 durometer rubber. The bands of rubber can be of
2 any suitable hardness and width. Alternatively, the
3 first rubber can be a 90 durometer rubber, and the
4 second rubber can be a 60 durometer rubber.

5

6 In an alternative embodiment, the formation comprises a
7 band of rubber or other suitable resilient material.
8 The band preferably defines a zigzag pattern on the
9 outer surface of the conduit. The rubber can be of any
10 suitable hardness, but is typically in the order of 40
11 to 90 durometers, although values of hardness outwith
12 this range may also be used.

13

14 The material properties and configuration of the or
15 each formation can be chosen to suit the particular
16 application.

17

18 The expandable conduit typically comprises an
19 expandable casing or liner. However, the expandable
20 conduit may be any suitable expandable pipe or the
21 like.

22

23 The formation is optionally detachable and preferably
24 applied to the outer surface of the conduit before the
25 conduit is expanded. The formation optionally
26 comprises two or more axially spaced formations.

27

28 The second conduit typically comprises a borehole,
29 casing, liner or the like. The expandable casing may
30 engage any type of conduit.

31

1 an expandable conduit to a borehole having a
2 different formation on an outer surface;
3 Fig. 4a is an front elevation of the formation of
4 Fig. 3; and
5 Fig. 4b is an end elevation of the formation of
6 Fig. 4a.

7
8 Referring to the drawing, Fig. 1 shows an exemplary
9 embodiment of apparatus for anchoring an expandable
10 conduit 12. The expandable conduit 12 is shown located
11 within a casing or liner 14. Conventionally, casing or
12 liner 14 is used to line or case a borehole that is
13 drilled into a formation 16 to facilitate the recovery
14 of hydrocarbons. It should be noted however, that the
15 expandable conduit 12 may be a liner or casing used to
16 case or line the borehole.

17
18 The expandable conduit 12 may be any type of suitable
19 conduit that is capable of sustaining plastic
20 deformation whereby it can be radially expanded by at
21 least 10%, although it may be radially expanded by a
22 value more or less than this.

23
24 The upper portion of Fig. 1 shows the expandable
25 conduit 12 in unexpanded form, with an expander device
26 18 located therein used to impart a radial expansion
27 force. The lower portion of Fig. 1 shows a portion of
28 the expandable conduit 12 radially expanded by the
29 expander device 18.

30
31 The expander device 18 typically comprises a cone. The
32 expander device 18 may be manufactured from steel, or

1 The first and second bands 22, 24 are typically of a
2 first depth. The third band 28 is typically of a
3 second depth. The first depth is typically larger than
4 the second depth, although they may be the same. Thus,
5 the first and second bands 22, 24 protrude further from
6 the surface 12s than the third band 28, as shown
7 schematically in Fig. 1.

8

9 The first type of rubber (i.e. first and second bands
10 22, 24) is preferably of a harder consistency than the
11 second type of rubber (ie third band 28). The first
12 type of rubber is typically 60 durometer rubber,
13 whereas the second type of rubber is typically 40
14 durometer rubber. Durometer is a conventional hardness
15 scale for rubber.

16

17 The particular properties of the rubber may be of any
18 suitable type and the hardnesses quoted are exemplary
19 only. It should also be noted that the relative
20 dimensions and spacings of the first, second and third
21 bands 22, 24, 28 are exemplary only and may be of any
22 suitable dimensions and spacing.

23

24 Referring to Figs 2a to 2c, there is shown an
25 alternative formation 50 that is substantially the same
26 as formation 20. In the embodiment shown in Figs 2a to
27 2c, the formation 50 comprises first and second bands
28 52, 54 of a first resilient material, with a third band
29 56 of a second resilient material located therebetween.

30

31 The first and second bands 52, 54 are around 1 inch
32 (approximately 25.4mm) wide, and are spaced-apart by

1 apart locations along the length of the expandable
2 conduit 12, the spacings and number of formations 20,
3 50 being chosen to suit the particular application.

4

5 The expandable conduit 12 is then run into a borehole,
6 casing or liner 14, or some other conduit onto which
7 the expandable conduit 12 is to be attached. As can be
8 seen in Fig. 1 (upper portion) when the expandable
9 conduit 12 is run into the casing or liner 14, an
10 annulus 30 is created between the outer surface 12s of
11 the expandable conduit 12 and an inner surface 14i of
12 the casing or liner 14. The expander device 18 is
13 typically located in an expanded portion 12e of the
14 expandable conduit 12 before the conduit 12 is run into
15 the casing or liner 14. It should be noted that the
16 conduit 12 is of the non-interference type wherein the
17 annulus 30 remains (although reduced in size) even when
18 the expandable conduit 12 is radially expanded ie there
19 is a gap between the expandable conduit 12 and the
20 casing or liner 14. Expandable conduit 12 need not be
21 of the non-interference type.

22

23 As the outer surface 12s of the expandable conduit 12
24 is not in direct contact with the inner surface 14i of
25 the casing or liner 14, a mechanical or other type of
26 anchoring device 32 (e.g. a slip) is used to provide a
27 temporary anchor whilst at least a portion of the
28 expandable conduit 12 is radially expanded. The
29 mechanical or other type of anchoring device 32 may be
30 of any conventional type and is typically attached at,
31 or near, the expanded portion 12e of the expandable
32 conduit 12.

1 anchors the expandable conduit 12 to the casing or
2 liner 14.

3

4 Additionally, the first and/or second rubbers may also
5 act as a seal that results in an annular pressure seal
6 that seals the annulus 30. Where two or more
7 formations 20, 50 are provided at axially spaced-apart
8 locations, the portions of the annulus 30 between the
9 formations 20, 50 will be isolated from one another.

10

11 After the formation 20, 50 has been expanded whereby
12 the first and second rubbers provide at least an anchor
13 point for the expandable casing 12 (and optionally a
14 seal for annulus 30), the mechanical or other type of
15 anchoring device 32 can be released, and optionally
16 removed from the casing or liner 14.

17

18 Referring to Fig. 3, there is shown an alternative
19 expandable conduit 100, that is a second embodiment of
20 apparatus of the present invention. Expandable conduit
21 100 is substantially the same as expandable conduit 12,
22 but has a further alternative formation 150 on an outer
23 surface 100s thereof.

24

25 The expandable conduit 100 may be any type of suitable
26 conduit that is capable of sustaining plastic
27 deformation whereby it can be radially expanded by at
28 least 10%, although it may be radially expanded by a
29 value more or less than this.

30

31 As can be seen from Fig. 3, the expandable conduit 100
32 is provided with a pre-expanded portion 100e in which

1 18° between each along one edge 150a of the band. The
2 process is then repeated by milling another 20 slots
3 152b on the other side 150b of the band, the slots on
4 the other side being circumferentially offset by 9°
5 from the slots 152a on the other side.

6

7 In use, the formation 150 is applied to the outer
8 surface 100s of the (unexpanded) expandable conduit
9 100. The formation 150 may be applied at axially
10 spaced-apart locations along the length of the
11 expandable conduit 100, as shown in Fig. 3, the
12 spacings and number of formations 100 being chosen to
13 suit the particular application.

14

15 The expandable conduit 100 is then run into a borehole,
16 casing or liner 14, or some other conduit onto which
17 the expandable conduit 100 is to be attached, and is
18 used in substantially the same way as conduit 12
19 described above.

20

21 Using the method and apparatus described herein for
22 anchoring an expandable conduit to a second conduit, it
23 is possible to case a wellbore using an expandable
24 conduit provided with the formation, without the use of
25 cement. This has significant advantages, particularly
26 in terms of cost due to the reduction of materials
27 required and rig down-time.

28

29 Thus, there is provided a method and apparatus of
30 anchoring an expandable conduit to a second conduit.
31 Certain embodiments of the apparatus and method
32 optionally provide a seal between the expandable

1 CLAIMS

2 1. Apparatus for anchoring an expandable conduit, the
3 apparatus comprising at least one formation provided on
4 an outer surface of the expandable conduit, the
5 formation being capable of engaging a second conduit in
6 which the expandable conduit is located, the formation
7 providing an anchor and/or seal for the expandable
8 conduit when the expandable conduit is at least
9 partially expanded.

10

11 2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the
12 formation comprises resilient material.

13

14 3. Apparatus according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein
15 the formation comprises first and second bands of a
16 first resilient material.

17

18 4. Apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the first
19 and second bands are axially spaced-apart, with a third
20 band of a second resilient material being located
21 between the first and second bands.

22

23 5. Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the first
24 resilient material is harder than the second resilient
25 material.

26

27 6. Apparatus according to claim 4 or claim 5, wherein
28 the first and/or second resilient materials are
29 profiled on an outer surface thereof to enhance
30 anchoring and/or sealing.

31

1
2 15. An expandable conduit according to claim 14,
3 wherein the first and second bands are axially spaced-
4 apart, with a third band of a second resilient material
5 being located between the first and second bands.

6

7 16. An expandable conduit according to claim 15,
8 wherein the first resilient material is harder than the
9 second resilient material.

10

11 17. An expandable conduit according to claim 15 or
12 claim 16, wherein the first and/or second resilient
13 materials are profiled on an outer surface thereof to
14 enhance anchoring and/or sealing.

15

16 18. An expandable conduit according to any one of
17 claims 15 to 17, wherein the first resilient material
18 comprises a first rubber, and the second resilient
19 material comprises a second rubber.

20

19. Apparatus according to claim 12 or claim 13,
wherein the formation comprises a band of resilient
material that defines a zigzag pattern on an outer
surface of the conduit.

25

26 20. An expandable conduit according to any one of
27 claims 12 to 19, wherein the formation is applied to
28 the outer surface of the conduit before the conduit is
29 expanded.

30

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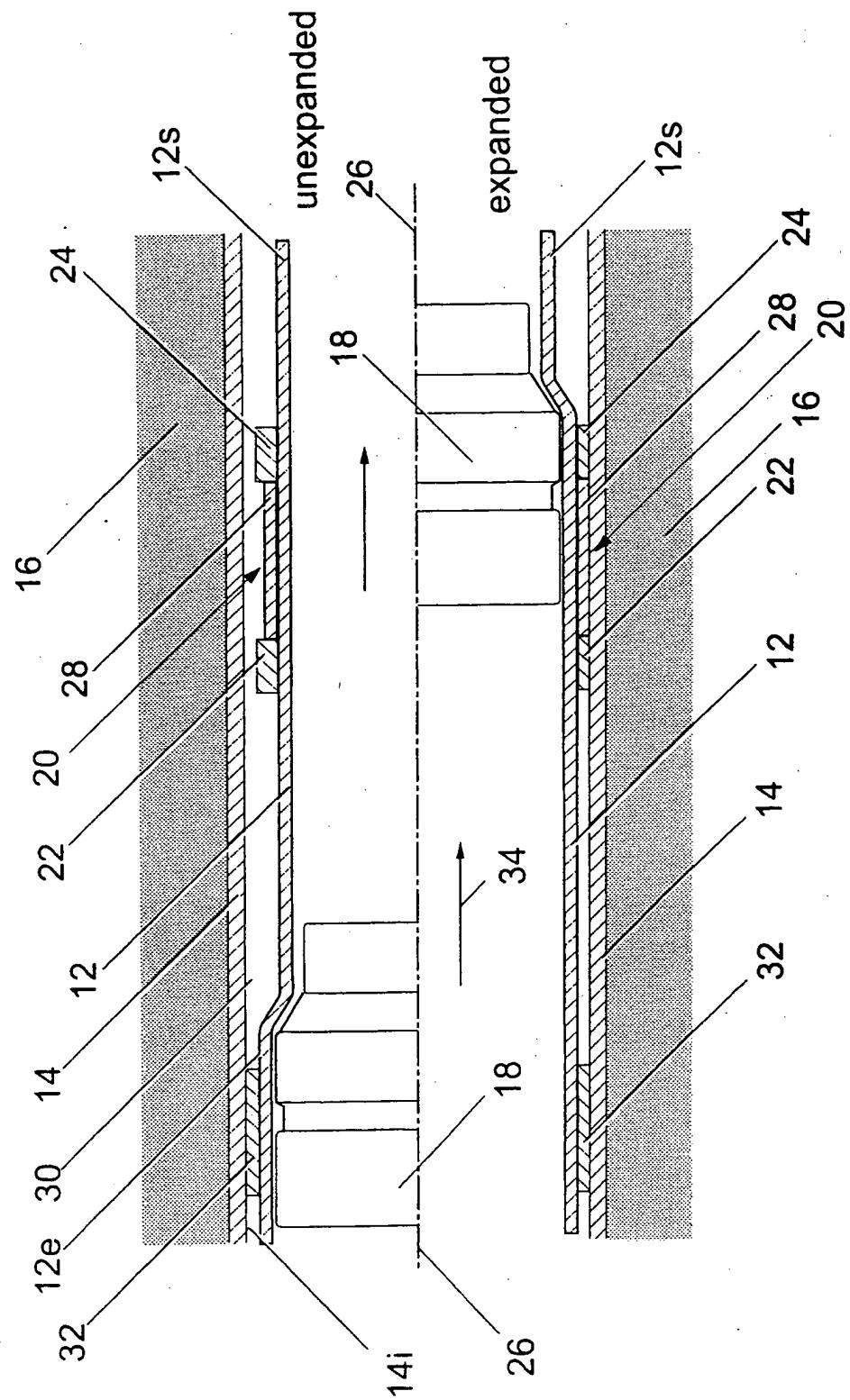
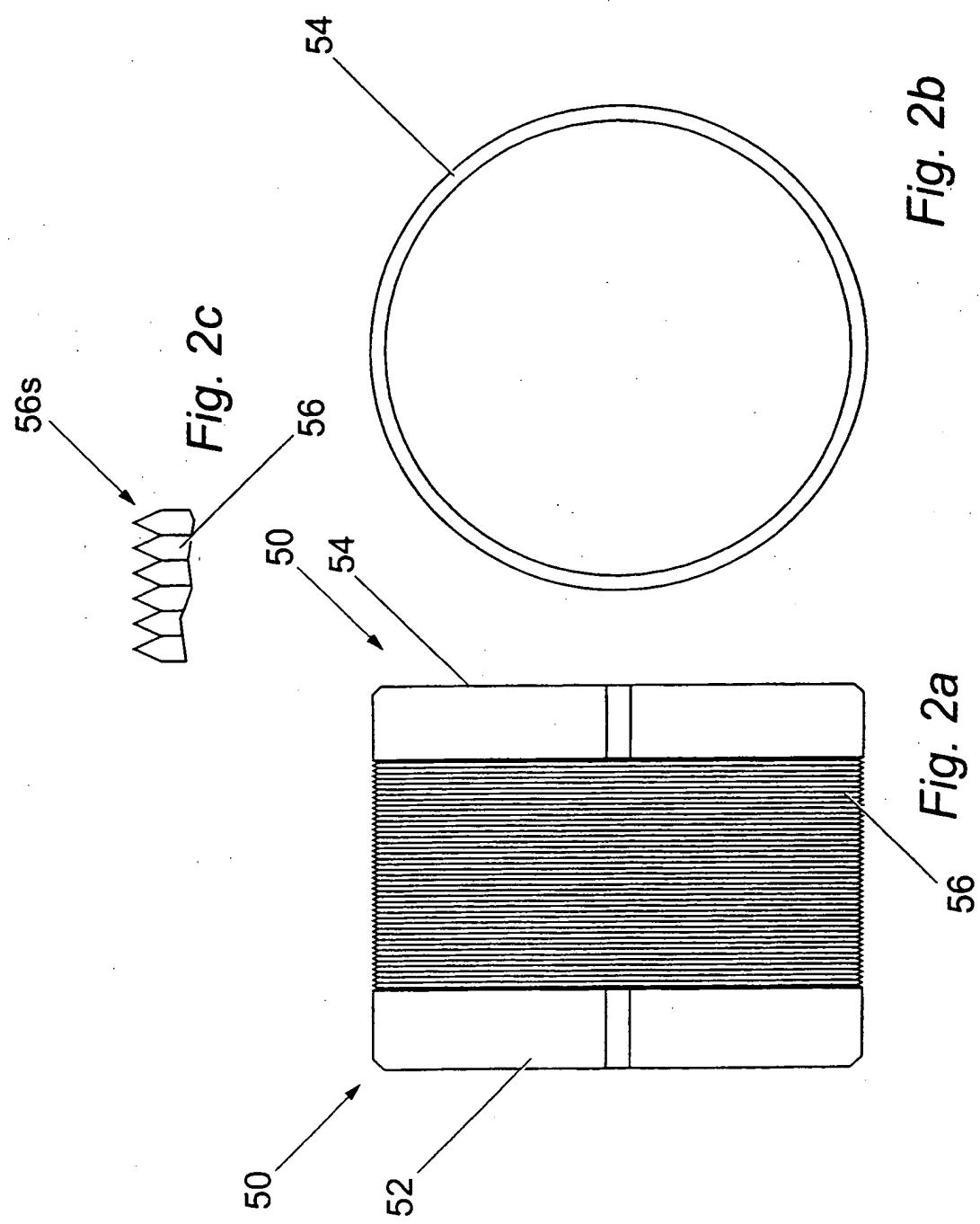


Fig. 1

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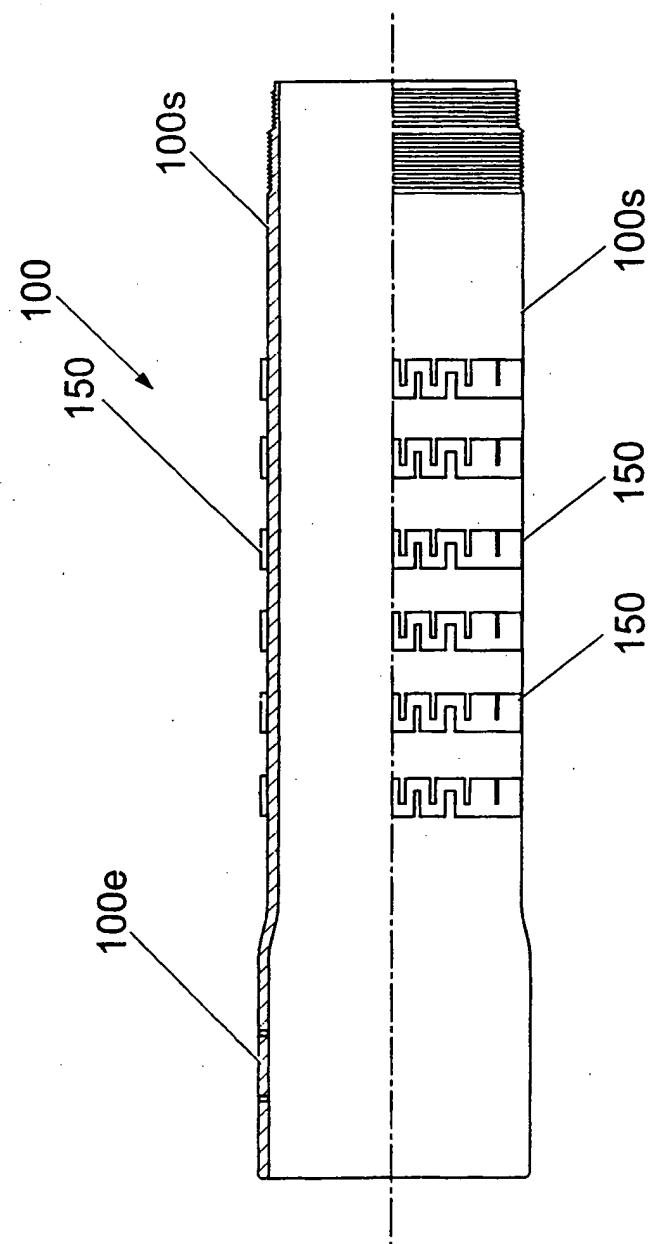


Fig. 3

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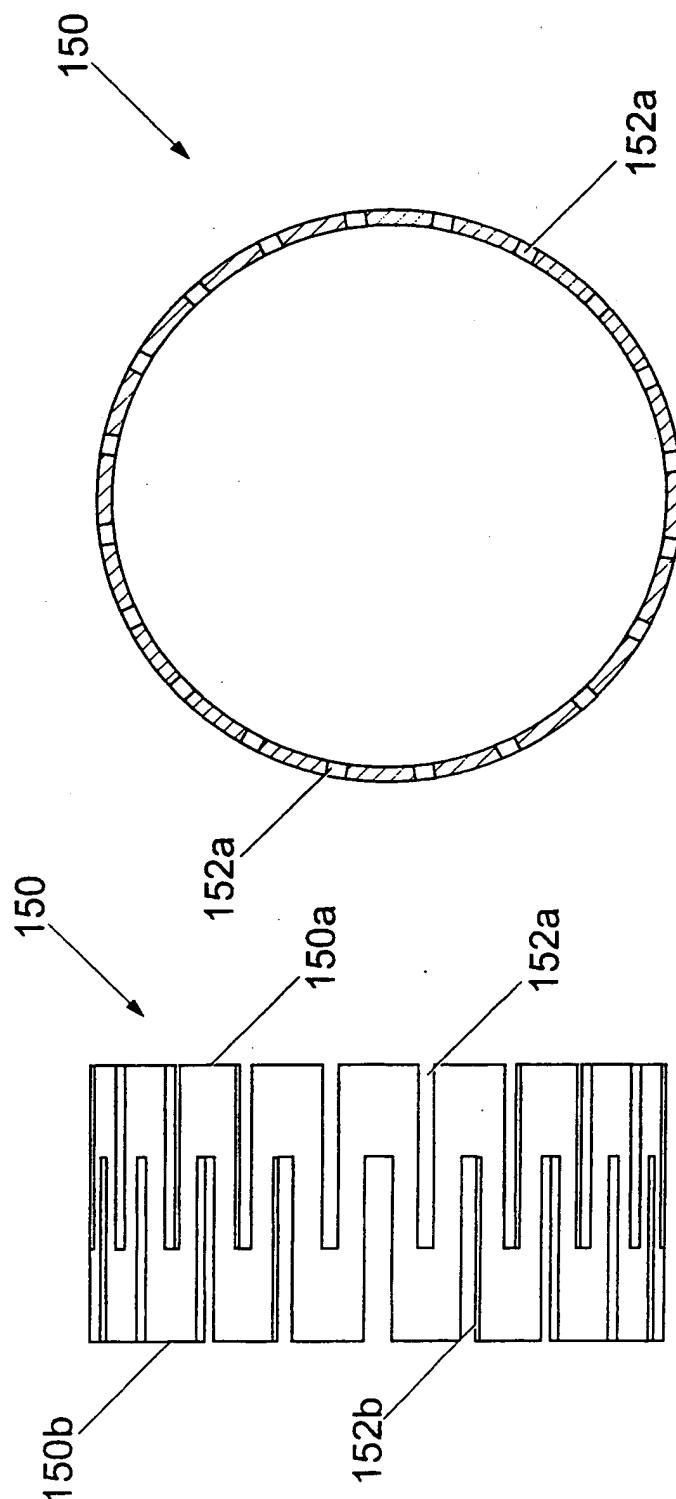


Fig. 4b

Fig. 4a

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/GB 00/03407

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 7 E21B43/10		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 7 E21B		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 3 776 307 A (YOUNG J) 4 December 1973 (1973-12-04) column 7, line 59 -column 8, line 17 figures 2,4	1-4,7,9, 10, 12-15, 18,20, 21,23,24
X	EP 0 881 354 A (SOFITECH NV ;SCHLUMBERGER CIE DOWELL (FR)) 2 December 1998 (1998-12-02) page 4, column 5, line 33-35 figure 2	1-4,7,9, 10, 12-15, 18,20,21
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 29 November 2000		Date of mailing of the international search report 06/12/2000
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patenlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel: (+31-70) 340-2040. Tx. 31 651 epo nl. Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer Schouten, A

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Information on patent family members

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